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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ZAGREB 000871

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KAWC](#) [NATO](#) [HR](#) [SR](#) [YI](#)
SUBJECT: A/S FRIED MEETING WITH CROATIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
AND PRIME MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador Robert Bradtke for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Assistant Secretary Dan Fried and FM Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic exchanged views on the failure of Serbian PM Kostunica to acknowledge that independence was Kosovo's ultimate destiny. Grabar-Kitarovic suggested slowing down the Kosovo status process to avoid destabilizing the Kostunica government; A/S Fried rejected change to the timetable, arguing that delay would not provide any benefits (with Serbia) to compensate for its costs. Croatia has an active dialog with both Belgrade and Pristina, and would like to be a partner with the US in resolution of the Kosovo issue. On Croatia's NATO aspirations, A/S Fried urged the GOC to do more on educating Croatians about the Alliance. Grabar-Kitarovic noted that the GOC is actively consulting with the Serbian government on Belgrade's hunt for PIFWC Ratko Mladic. End Summary

¶2. (U) A/S Fried met July 10 with Croatian FM Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic on the margins of the "Croatia Summit 2006" in Dubrovnik. Grabar-Kitarovic was joined by MFA State Secretary Hidajet Biscevic, Croatian Ambassador to the US

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Neven Jurica, Croatian Ambassador to NATO Davor Bozinovic, and MFA advisor Betty Pavelic-Sirois. A/S Fried was accompanied by DCM (notetaker). Following the Grabar-Kitarovic meeting he had a brief pull-aside with PM Ivo Sanader, at which A/S Fried was joined by the Ambassador.

Serbia/Kosovo

¶3. (C) Assistant Secretary Fried began the meeting by noting his concern about Serbia and Kosovo. PM Kostunica has been told clearly (though in private only) that Kosovo will become independent, but nevertheless keeps saying publicly that this will be unacceptable. He noted that the Serbs seem to be misreading Russia's interest in the issue -- Russia cares about Kosovo because of its interest in the precedential implications its independence might have for South Ossetia and Chechnya. Our message to Pristina is that it has to demonstrate that Kosovo needs to earn responsibility and statehood, which is not a gift or entitlement; our message to Belgrade is to stop holding on to the past. We will not ask Belgrade to explicitly agree to an independent Kosovo, he noted; but we do expect Serbia will not behave in a disruptive fashion. Serbia potentially has a better future than the Serbs realize; the USG wants Serbia to feel that it has a valid European future. Milosevic lost Kosovo, not Tadic and Kostunica; the current government needs to find a way to blame Milosevic.

¶4. (C) FM Grabar-Kitarovic agreed that the psychology of ignoring reality was a real problem in Serbia. She noted that Kostunica was disappointed with the results of the

Montenegro referendum - he and FM Draskovic thought the "yes" vote would not pass 55 percent. Loss of Kosovo will be harder for Serbs to accept than the loss of Montenegro. The international community must facilitate between Pristina and Belgrade, she said, and support the Belgrade government to help it remain in power. With all its faults, the current Serbian government is the best the country has had yet.

15. (C) Croatia is not worried about another war with Serbia, Grabar-Kitarovic noted, despite the territorial Claims on Croatia some Radical Party members have expressed. Nevertheless, a Radical-led government would represent a real setback for Serbia and the region. Croatia is concerned that Kostunica is thinking of engineering a Radical-led government to take the blame for the loss of Kosovo. If Kostunica is to remain in power, he will want a Kosovo solution imposed on him.

16. (C) Croatia does not believe the move toward Kosovo's independence should proceed too quickly - it is concerned about the rise in popular support of the Radical Party, which will continue to grow as the Kosovo issue comes to a head. One option is to slow down the status process, press Belgrade to write a new constitution, and then wait for election of a new democratic government. A/S Fried, however, disagreed strongly that the timeline on Kosovo status resolution should be altered - slowing down the process will not provide any real benefits; suspending status talks until there is a new government in Belgrade would guarantee that there would be no new government in Belgrade for a year. The region cannot be hostage to Serbian politics, he said.

17. (C) State Secretary Biscevic said that the active bilateral relationship between Croatia and Serbia, as well as their joint participation in the Southeast Europe Cooperative Process (SEECp) gave Croatia an opportunity to be a valuable

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partner in resolution of the Kosovo issue. It has an effective dialog with both Kostunica and President Tadic. He noted that Prime Minister Sanader would be in Belgrade on July 21.

18. (C) A/S Fried and Grabar-Kitarovic agreed that Kosovo status should not be linked with issues in Bosnia-Herzegovina or anywhere else. There is no "precedent" in the Kosovo situation for any other issue. They agreed our governments should remain in touch on Kosovo status issues.

Standards

19. (C) Grabar-Kitarovic expressed concern that the standards process has not moved forward recently. A/S Fried replied that it was important for the Kosovo leadership to do more; independence would not be a gift, it must be earned. Ceku does need to do more, but Belgrade has been blocking the Kosovar Serbs from moving forward, so the Kosovar authorities are not the only problem; Belgrade needs to allow the Kosovar Serbs to negotiate a good deal with the Albanians.

Croatia/NATO

10. (C) A/S Fried said he appreciated all that Croatia has done recently to become a security provider. NATO membership has brought with it obligations, not just an Article 5 guarantee. After the Riga NATO Summit he hoped the government would do a better job of explaining to Croatians what NATO means and brings.

11. (C) Grabar-Kitarovic said that recent visits by NATO international staff and officials of NATO member states have been very helpful in educating the public. Biscevic said that once there is a clear prospect for Croatia's NATO membership Croats will support it more. He also noted the importance that all of Croatia's political leadership of all mainstream parties agree on Croatia's future in NATO.

Croatia's increasing level of cooperation with NATO and the EU was one of the best incentives for Serbian cooperation with the international community, he noted.

ICTY

¶12. (C) A/S Fried asked how Croatia can support Serbia's cooperation with ICTY on the PIFWC issue; Kostunica has promised to arrest Mladic multiple times but has not delivered, and this issue still blocks expanded Serbian cooperation with the EU and NATO. He noted that Croatia had handled the political challenges of arresting its PIFWC (Ante Gotovina) very well.

¶13. (C) Biscevic said that Croatia is actively consulting Serbia on the Mladic hunt; he thought Kostunica was serious in his desire to catch the fugitive, but that he faced serious challenges as well, especially in the security services and military. Grabar-Kitarovic said that one obstacle for Kostunica was the fear that arresting Mladic might lead to an assassination attempt against the prime minister.

Pull-Aside with PM Sanader

¶14. (C) A/S Fried asked PM Sanader to work with the USG to reach out to Belgrade and to Kosovar Albanians on Kosovo issues; he promised to keep the GOC informed about our progress on Kosovo. Sanader replied that Croatia would not conduct a solo policy in the region; it would work with the USG and Europe to advance our joint agenda. In addition, Croatia is already consulting with Serbia on PIFWC issues, trying to give Serbia the benefit of Croatia's experience in the Gotovina hunt. He said he would travel to Belgrade on July 21.

¶15. (C) Sanader expressed his desire for an early White House meeting with President Bush.
BRADTKE